

REMARKS

In the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph; rejected claims 1-3, 9-14, and 17-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japanese Patent Publication No. 06-188240 to Takahisa ("Takahisa"); and indicated claims 4-8 and 15-16 as containing allowable subject matter.

By this amendment, Applicants have amended claims 2-7, 9-12, 14, 15, and 17-20. In addition, Applicants have canceled claims 1 and 13, and added new claims 21-27. Claims 2-12 and 14-27 are now pending.

Regarding the Examiner's rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, Applicants disagree with the Examiner's assertion claim 1 is indefinite¹. However, in order to expedite prosecution, Applicants have canceled claim 1. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, is moot.

Regarding the rejection of claims 1-3, 9-14, and 17-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Applicants also disagree with the Examiner's conclusions and characterizations of Takahisa, as set forth in the outstanding Office Action. Applicants note that claims 1 and 13 have been canceled, and the rejection of these claims is now moot. Moreover, in order to expedite prosecution, Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 4-8 and 15-16, and have amended claims 4, 6, and 15 to place them into independent form. Since the Examiner indicated

¹ The Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement of characterization in the Office Action.

that claims 4, 6, and 15 contained allowable subject matter, Applicants submit that amended independent claims 4, 6, and 15 are allowable. Moreover, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2, 3, 5 and 9-12, claims 7, 8, and 21-27, and claims 14, and 16-20, are also allowable at least due to their respective dependence on allowable claims 4, 6, and 15.

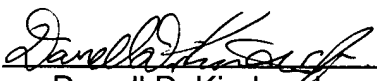
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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